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Effects of atomic radiation

Letter dated 12 October 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Belarus addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith an appeal by Belarusian scientists to the United Nations General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 82.

(*Signed*) Sergey **Ling**
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Belarus to the United Nations

00-68740 (E) 131000 131000

Annex to the letter dated 12 October 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Belarus addressed to the Secretary-General

Appeal by a group of scientists of the Republic of Belarus to the United Nations General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session

Having carefully read and studied the contents of annex J to the 2000 report of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR), entitled "Exposures and effects of the Chernobyl accident", concerning the medical effects of the Chernobyl accident, submitted to the United Nations General Assembly for consideration at its fifty-fifth session, we, a group of scientists of the Republic of Belarus, appeal to the General Assembly to postpone consideration of annex J to the report of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation until a later date.

The reason which has prompted us to make such an appeal is that the information presented in the annex to the report entitled "Exposures and effects of the Chernobyl accident" is incomplete and not always objective and contains a number of inaccuracies in the section concerning the medical effects of the Chernobyl accident for the Republic of Belarus.

On the whole, it is difficult to overestimate the importance of a report of this kind. Undoubtedly such a report should receive great attention from the participants in the current session of the United Nations General Assembly and serve as a guide to the activities of specialists, interested international organizations and the Governments of the countries of the world community. We well understand and welcome the aims of UNSCEAR and the efforts made by the Committee to present a full and objective picture of exposures to radiation and the medical effects of the accident. However, it cannot be said that this complex goal has been fully achieved with regard to Belarus.

The main reason why annex J, "Exposures and effects of the Chernobyl accident", cannot be fully satisfactory to the scientific community of Belarus is that a number of the important results achieved in Belarus appeared to be outside the field of vision of UNSCEAR. This applies, in the first place, to the new scientific research data, including epidemiological data, obtained in recent years, and the results of the study of the teratogenic and genetic effects of the Chernobyl accident. Unfortunately, there are distortions in the interpretation of the aforementioned work of Belarusian scientists.

We feel obliged to state that the Belarusian scientists only had an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the report at a rather late stage. On 28 September 2000, in Minsk, a detailed discussion of annex J took place with Mr. Holm, the Chairman of UNSCEAR, during which we were given an opportunity to make detailed comments. Mr. Holm agreed with a number of the comments made by the Belarusian side. The two sides came to an understanding of the need to explore ways of direct cooperation between UNSCEAR and the Republic of Belarus and to continue the scientific research on problems related to the Chernobyl accident, in the first place, by carrying out long-term international programmes to reduce the uncertainty in the estimates of radiation doses, epidemiology and genetics.

We have serious grounds for believing that the approval of the report by such a high-level forum would not only be detrimental to the efforts of Belarus to overcome the effects of the Chernobyl accident and lead to cutbacks in scientific programmes and international assistance, but, ultimately, would have an adverse effect on the fate of millions of people who are still experiencing the burdens and hardships associated with the accident.

At the same time, it is difficult to overestimate the results achieved by scientific research and the experience in overcoming the effects of the Chernobyl accident for the whole world community in the event of further nuclear accidents.

We believe that, in its present form, annex J to the report of UNSCEAR, "Exposures and effects of the Chernobyl accident", cannot be considered by the United Nations as an official document which objectively and fully reflects the effects of the Chernobyl accident for Belarus. Scientists and specialists in the Republic of Belarus are prepared to present and discuss scientific data which were not taken into account by UNSCEAR, in order to help the Committee in completing the report.

In this connection, we urge that the General Assembly should take note of annex J to the report of UNSCEAR for 2000, "Exposures and effects of the Chernobyl accident" and recommend that UNSCEAR should continue its work on the annex for subsequent consideration at the fifty-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly.

(*Signed*) V. I. **Ternov**
Chairman of the National Commission on Radiation Protection of the Republic of Belarus, Professor

(*Signed*) E. F. **Konoplya**
Chairman of the Coordination Council on Scientific Problems related to the Effects of the Chernobyl Accident of the Republic of Belarus, Director of the Institute of Radiobiology of the National Academy of Sciences, Academician, Professor

(*Signed*) V. A. **Ostapenko**
Director of the Scientific Research Clinical Institute of Radiation Medicine and Endocrinology, Professor

(*Signed*) Y. E. **Kenigsberg**
Deputy Director of the Scientific Research Clinical Institute of Radiation Medicine and Endocrinology, Professor

(*Signed*) A. E. **Okeanov**
Head of Department, Scientific Research Institute of Oncology and Medical Radiology, Professor